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BOSTON GLOBE  
26 July 1983

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# CIA's Latin buildup plan assailed

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WASHINGTON - In their strongest language to date, House Democratic and Republican leaders sharply criticized plans within the Administration yesterday to escalate covert activity in Nicaragua, with minority leader Robert Michel saying he could not "conceive" of President Ronald Reagan approving the levels being proposed by the CIA.

"I can't conceive of us going to the lengths that have been reported," said the Illinois Republican. He said he told Reagan directly of his "dismay" at the reports at a small private White House luncheon.

"Whatever cause there is for some of these stories may well have been picked up

from some working papers," said Michel, but the GOP leader insisted that Reagan had neither made a decision nor even seen the new proposals.

"I just expounded my complete dismay at what I was reading. Judas Priest, we have not been talking about that kind of thing... I just can't imagine this is the route we're going.

"It's really gutting us and undercutting us," he said in reference to the impact on his own efforts to find some compromise to blunt a Democratic-sponsored resolution this week to terminate all aid. "The President assured me that I was not going to be left hanging out there... It's one thing to write a story based on option papers. It's another to be based on a decision."

More than a week ago, sources reported that the size of the anti-Sandinista insurgency was expected to grow to between

12,000 and 15,000, and the CIA is known to have discussed these figures with Intelligence Committee members. Whether a final decision has been made is disputed, but The New York Times published a report yesterday saying the White House had already given general approval to plans including stepped up aid to the guerrillas and a campaign of sabotage against Cuban installations in Nicaragua.

Michel's comments came as House Intelligence chairman Edward Boland (D-Mass.) said he would "absolutely" press for a final vote this week on the resolution to terminate aid.

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. also condemned the latest steps by the Administration to escalate military pressure on Nicaragua. "I think it is awful. I think it is absolutely awful," said the liberal Democrat. "I think it is frightening to the American public and the people there [in Nicaragua]. It's an unneeded show of strength and an unneeded show of strength can cause terrible problems."

Both O'Neill and Boland have been consistently cautious about predicting passage of the resolution. But among Democrats, there appears to be increased unity behind the initiative which may gain strength from the concern now over the options being reviewed by

the President.

Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.), one of the most conservative Democrats on the House committee, said yesterday that he would now support Boland after talking with the Administration about a possible compromise. Majority leader Jim Wright (D-Texas) last week dismissed any prospect for a last minute agreement as remote.

"The President is a politician and he has political types working for him," said a Republican source close to the Senate Intelligence Committee, which has been watching the House fight from the sidelines. "I think the House may send him a message this week."

Though the CIA has yet to sub-

mit any new finding to support a major increase in the covert aid, the operation and its costs have grown steadily in recent months and, according to critics, is virtually beyond the agency's control.

A Senate Intelligence Committee source said yesterday that before the end of this fiscal year Sept. 30, the annual cost of the operation was expected to be near \$40 million, and by the same calculations the cost for 1984 could be closer to \$50 million.

The Senate committee, while not directly challenging the Administration, has set aside less than half this total in a reserve fund in the 1984 authorization act. Release of these monies will be subject to approval of a new finding to be submitted by the Administration. This arrangement has received much less attention than the House bill, but it gives the committee an unprecedented veto over further covert activity.

Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), chairman of the budget subcommittee, said he expected the authorizing bill to come to the floor Thursday. Sources said that CIA director William Casey met with Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), the ranking Democrat on the committee, yesterday to discuss the Nicaragua issue.

Moynihan refused any comment later on the reported buildup. While a recent intelligence analysis has downplayed the threat of the

insurgents to the Nicaraguan government, the size of the operation is still a major concern in Congress, and whatever the outcome in the House, a strong vote against the President could strengthen the Senate committee's resolve to curb further aid.